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First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects

7-11 July 2003

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 7 July 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Inoguchi ..... (Japan)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Opening of the Meeting by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs

1. **Mr. Abe** (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs), declaring open the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, said that the Meeting represented a milestone, both in the promotion of global action for disarmament, human security, the development of and respect for human rights, and in the protection of society's most vulnerable groups. Quite apart from its inherent importance, the Programme of Action also represented a formidable challenge. He welcomed the efforts of the international community to halt the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the commitment it had shown in that regard. The United Nations and the Department for Disarmament Affairs would continue to assist Member States in their efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

Election of the Chairperson

2. *Ms. Inoguchi (Japan) was elected Chairperson by acclamation.*

3. *Ms. Inoguchi took the Chair.*

Statement of the Chairperson

4. **The Chairperson** said that the First Biennial Meeting was part of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York from 9 to 20 July 2001. The Meeting represented the first opportunity for States to exchange experiences and define appropriate strategies for resolving the problems they had encountered. It would enhance their participation and empowerment in the process begun in July 2001, and would strengthen the partnerships created under various international assistance and cooperation projects. The dialogue should be as forthright as possible, with a view to finding solutions to the many problems that had arisen and profiting from the enormous potential offered by the Programme of Action.

5. The Programme of Action resulted from the political will of Member States to enter into constructive negotiations concerning issues of common interest. She wished to congratulate Mr. Camilo Reyes of Colombia, the President of the United Nations Conference held in July 2001. Thanks to his tireless efforts and personal commitment, allied with his exceptional diplomatic abilities, it had been possible to adopt the Programme of Action by consensus.

6. The time had come to translate the Programme of Action into concrete acts in order to alleviate the suffering caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. To judge from the reports submitted to the Secretary-General by over 70 countries and from the information provided by international, regional and subregional organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations, the international community intended to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects.

7. In his report to the Security Council of 20 September 2002 (S/2002/1053), the Secretary-General stated: "The spread of illicit small arms and light weapons is a global threat to human security and human rights. At least 500,000 people die every year as a result of the use of small arms and light weapons. Of the estimated 4 million war-related deaths during the 1990s, 90 per cent of those killed were civilians, and 80 per cent of those were women and children, mostly victims of the misuse of small arms and light weapons. In addition, tens of millions more people have lost their livelihoods, homes and families because of the indiscriminate and pervasive use of these weapons." The total value of exports of small arms and light weapons in 2002 had been approximately 2.1 billion dollars, and legal international trade had accounted for only around half of that total.

8. The problem of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was multidimensional in nature, and should be considered accordingly. It was only by tackling the problem at the global, regional and national levels, addressing all its thematic aspects, becoming involved, creating partnerships and launching assistance and cooperation initiatives that progress could be made. Only through collective action by States could the problem be resolved.

9. That was why States had made a commitment, through the Programme of Action, to cooperate in, and

better coordinate their fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and to form partnerships, at all levels, between international and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, non-governmental organizations and international financial institutions.

10. The purpose of the various informal consultations held in both New York and Geneva, as well as the bilateral contacts with Member States, had been to respond to States' concerns and expectations, find common ground, and promote a multilateral process.

11. In view of the vast experience and tremendous capacities of States, and their collective commitment, it should be possible to halt the global proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons.

Message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read by the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs

12. **Mr. Abe** (Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs), reading out the message, said that it would be difficult to overstate the importance of implementing the Programme of Action adopted in 2001 at the first United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, because of the mass destruction those armaments caused. They killed about 60 people an hour, or half a million people a year, 90 per cent of them women and children. The wider consequences of small arms proliferation were less quantifiable, but no less palpable.

13. Member States would have an opportunity to exchange information on the progress they had achieved in implementing the Programme of Action at the national, regional and global levels and to take stock of how far there was still to go.

14. It was particularly encouraging to note the depth of commitment shown by many Member States over the previous two years, as evidenced by the initiatives described in national reports. Notable regional efforts had been made and civil society, especially non-governmental organizations, had played a significant role in that connection.

15. It was to be hoped that even greater headway would be made in implementing the Programme of Action before the Second Biennial Meeting in 2005 and the Review Conference in 2006. Member States must expedite the implementation of the Programme of Action and do all they could to assist others in that respect. For its part, the United Nations intended to continue helping the world community to prevent, combat and eradicate all aspects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

Adoption of the rules of procedure (A/CONF.192/L.1)

16. **The Chairperson** said that, during earlier informal consultations, the proposal had been accepted that the rules of procedure of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects should apply mutatis mutandis to the First Biennial Meeting of States. Moreover, many non-governmental organizations which had not taken part in the Conference in 2001 wished to participate in the First Biennial Meeting. In order to facilitate their participation, on 12 June 2003, the Secretariat, in accordance with rule 63 (a) and (b) of the rules of procedure in document A/CONF.192/L.1, had sent Member States a note verbale listing all the non-governmental organizations in question. The list should be submitted for tacit approval. If she heard no objections and if no delegation wished to speak, she took it that delegations wished to allow those non-governmental organizations to participate in the work of the Meeting.

17. *It was so decided.*

Adoption of the agenda
(A/CONF.192/BMS/2003/L.1/Rev.1)

18. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of other officers of the Meeting

19. **The Chairperson** announced that, following earlier informal consultations, it had been agreed that the officers of the meeting would consist of 15 vice-chairpersons — three from each of the five regional groups. Canada, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia and Uganda had been nominated by their respective groups. She asked whether she could take it that the participants wished to elect the representatives of the above-mentioned countries as vice-chairpersons by acclamation.

20. *It was so decided.*

Organization of work (A/CONF.192/BMS/2003/L.2)

21. **The Chairperson** said that four meetings would be devoted to the national implementation of the Programme of Action, one meeting to statements by non-governmental organizations and civil society, one meeting to the regional and global implementation of the Programme of Action and three meetings to the thematic discussion. The first four meetings would offer Member States' representatives an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the Programme of Action by pinpointing progress made and the obstacles encountered. They would make it possible to learn from experience and look to the future. She had circulated a non-paper containing discussion themes in an effort to facilitate and focus the debates. Lastly, at earlier informal consultations, it had been agreed that, in addition to the Meeting report on procedural questions, she would write a summary of the debates which would commit only herself and which would be annexed to the report.

Consideration of the national implementation of the Programme of Action

22. **Mr. Trezza** (Italy), speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), the acceding countries, the associated countries, the European Free Trade Association countries and the members of the European Economic Area, said the excessive and illicit transfer of small arms and their destabilizing accumulation threatened international security and social and economic stability and had serious humanitarian implications. Statistics on the subject varied widely, but according to reliable estimates there were more than 600 million small arms throughout the world, significantly more than in 2001. The number of innocent civilian victims of small arms in conflict and post-conflict situations remained very high.

23. The upsurge in terrorism since September 2001 required a strengthening of international cooperation.

24. The European Union hoped the Meeting would adopt an ambitious approach and above all that the discussions on the most important aspects of the issue would enable States to make as much progress as possible in advance of the Second Biennial Meeting, to be held in 2005, and the Review Conference in 2006. The European Union suggested that, in the thematic discussion, delegations should focus on export controls, marking and tracing, brokering activities and the relationships between small arms and development. The Union was seeking to comply with the provisions of the Programme of Action at three different levels, by strengthening domestic legislation, actively contributing to initiatives launched by regional bodies (OSCE, the Wassenaar Arrangement) and providing financial and technical assistance to countries affected by the spread of such weapons.

25. On the legislation front, two major developments should be noted: the amendment of the EU joint action on small arms and the adoption of a common position on the control of arms brokering. Within OSCE, EU member States had drawn up best practices guidelines. Under the Wassenaar Arrangement, EU member States had cooperated in the adoption, in December 2002, of best practices guidelines for exports of small arms and a statement of understanding on arms-brokering activities.

26. Between 2001 and 2003, the EU had allocated some €7.7 million in aid to countries affected by the uncontrolled and illicit transfer of small arms and their destabilizing accumulation. It had also supported projects in Cambodia (around €3.3 million), Latin America and the Caribbean (€345,000) and Albania (€550,000). It had also contributed €200,000 to cover the running costs of the Stability Pact/UNDP Regional Clearinghouse on small arms and light weapons, located in Belgrade. The EU intended to continue supporting those three projects. In addition to the projects supported by the Union, there were also projects funded from the European Commission budget. A financial agreement granting €2 million over three years had been signed by the United Republic of Tanzania and the European Commission in May 2003, for example, as part of a large-scale project implemented by Safer Africa.

27. Through its political support and its financial contributions to small arms-related projects, the EU had become one of the major international actors in the fight against the illicit trafficking of small arms, and it intended to continue along that path.

28. In the EU's view, it was important, among other things, to press on with work on export controls, which were an essential tool for curtailing the traffic in small arms. It suggested that consideration should be given to drafting common national and international standards to prevent legal trade from being diverted into illegal channels. The code of conduct on arms exports adopted

by the EU in 1998 offered a model towards which other legislations could converge.

29. The EU also gave high priority to control of arms-brokering activities, which, along with trafficking, were among the main features fuelling the illegal trade worldwide. The enactment of strict domestic legislation on brokering, as foreseen by the common position, should be complemented by a transparent exchange of relevant information. The EU strongly favoured the adoption of a binding multilateral instrument in the near future.

30. Marking and tracing were also very important in the elimination of illicit trade channels. Common marking standards must therefore be established and agreement reached on common procedures, both at the level of national legislation and in the area of international cooperation. The EU welcomed the conclusions of the United Nations expert group and believed the adoption of a multilateral legally binding instrument on the subject would enable significant progress to be made, in particular by making it easier to collect evidence against the illegal traders and those engaged in terrorist activities.

31. The EU considered it important to achieve greater transparency in reporting on small arms and would encourage projects in support of national and subregional reporting on small arms transfers.

32. In the EU's view, conflict-prone countries should be given help in fostering security, disarmament and demobilization and reintegration of former combatants within the framework of strategies for development. Its support programme for Cambodia incorporated a "weapons for development" component. He hoped the Meeting would draw lessons from current and past programmes and would agree on common measures to be adopted at the national, regional and global levels.

33. The implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action should be monitored and enhanced after the First Biennial Meeting. The EU looked forward with great interest to the Biennial Meeting scheduled for 2005, which would be a crucial stage in preparations for the 2006 Review Conference. The EU would submit its candidature for the presidency of the 2005 Conference in due course.

34. As part of that process, the EU would also welcome contributions from, and the participation of, relevant NGOs and civil society, whose input to the work of the current Meeting had been invaluable. Success would be guaranteed if all worked together.

35. **Mr. Elvemar** (Sweden) said that his country associated itself with the statement made by Italy on behalf of the European Union and wished to stress a few points that he considered particularly important.

36. Inasmuch as conflict prevention was encouraged by the Programme of Action, it was fitting to reduce the violence of such conflicts by addressing the principal factors that fed the demand for light weapons. Once armed conflicts were brought under control, disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of former combatants would prevent a return to chaos. One must concern oneself with long-term reintegration, due to its close connection with economic and social development, and devote greater attention to the protection of children, especially through the prevention of their recruitment as soldiers.

37. Control of exports lay at the heart of the battle against illegal trafficking in light weapons; hence the desire of Sweden to see multilateral norms defined in that regard.

38. Sweden also favoured the elaboration of a binding multilateral agreement to control brokering activities.

39. Weapons tracing should also be systematized to prevent weapons from being misused for illicit purposes. Weapons marking, record-keeping and international cooperation were important in that regard.

40. Sweden felt that a binding multilateral instrument for identifying and tracing light weapons would help to combat illicit trade in light weapons.

41. Sweden intended to participate actively in the implementation of the United Nations Programme with respect both to the elaboration of international norms and the provision of concrete assistance to States that needed it.

42. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that he associated himself with the statement of the European Union and wished to make a few additional remarks. The evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action ought to make it possible to determine the most important measures to be adopted in order to accelerate the process. Norway welcomed the renewed interest in the question of light weapons observable in many quarters. The related

humanitarian aspects were also gaining the attention of the Human Security Network.

43. Norway had long recommended the adoption of an international strategy covering all aspects of arms trade and hoped that such a strategy would become a reality by the time of the review conference planned for 2006. In order for international cooperation in the fight against light weapons trafficking to be effective, agreement would also have to be reached on acceptable standards of behaviour for States. Moreover, the fight against international terrorism and organized crime should come under a common approach. It was encouraging to note that a growing number of Governments were enacting new national legislation or amending existing legislation with a view to combating arms traffic. Also encouraging was the fact that regional cooperation in the Euro-Atlantic area, Africa and Latin America was focusing more and more on light weapons. This had been greatly facilitated by European Union efforts aimed at the elaboration of a code of conduct on light weapons, The States bound by the Wassenaar Arrangement also recognized the importance of the efforts to suppress arms trafficking and were striving to make their legislation more effective. Norway was an active contributor to that work and deplored the fact that the secretariat of the Wassenaar Arrangement was not represented at the Conference.

44. National reports, which were crucial for the implementation of the Programme of Action, had been submitted by only some 70 Member States, some of which had experienced difficulties stemming from a lack of human and financial resources. By the time of the 2005 Biennial Meeting, all the Member States should have submitted their national reports. Norway, in its desire to contribute to the realization of that ambitious goal, had requested the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to create a programme to help certain countries in preparing their national reports in cooperation with the Department for Disarmament Affairs. The Department had reacted by setting up a programme which had already made it possible to help some 20 countries to prepare their national reports for the Meeting.

45. To accelerate the process, Norway had contributed approximately $360,000 to the UNDP Trust Fund, $70,000 of which would be used for the programme in 2003. Norway encouraged countries that were able to do the same to do so. Norway had launched an initiative with the Netherlands to promote a common approach in the area of arms brokering. The initiative had led to the holding of a conference of interested parties in Oslo in April. The conclusions of the conference, attended by 71 experts from 28 countries, would be presented in connection with the Biennial Meeting.

46. Norway also intended to strengthen its cooperation with regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Pacific Forum. A number of non-governmental organizations concerned with light weapons were making a valuable contribution to that initiative. Norway had contributed approximately $70,000 to cover the travel expenses of a number of NGOs participating in the Meeting.

47. Considerable steps had been taken to put a stop to illicit trade in light weapons, but a number of problems that still existed at the national and international levels needed to be solved. There was some hope that the idea of a binding overall international agreement on international arms trade might be broached at the 2006 review conference.

48. **Ms. Notutela** (South Africa) said that it was discouraging, two years after the adoption of the United Nations Programme of Action, to see the large quantity of light weapons in circulation in Africa, feeding conflicts all over the continent. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) contained a peace and security initiative that called for the promotion of long-term conditions for the development of security in Africa. African States were striving to strengthen their capacities in fields such as conflict prevention, management and settlement; the re-establishment, maintenance and consolidation of peace; reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction following conflicts; and the fight against the illicit proliferation of light weapons. South Africa considered the Biennial Meeting an opportunity for Member States to assess the implementation of the Programme of Action in the different countries, to determine what fields might benefit from greater cooperation and to determine priorities, in particular the strengthening of capacities; the marking and tracing of weapons; the management, collection and destruction of stockpiles; and the improvement of cooperation.

49. Since the adoption of the Programme of Action in July 2001, South Africa had participated in numerous activities in the fight against the illicit trade in light weapons. Those activities were described in its national report. It had organized an African conference on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on light weapons in Pretoria in March 2002 and had ratified the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials in the region of the Southern African Development Community. At the national level, legislation had been adopted to control the possession of firearms by civilians and to regulate the national system of arms transfers. The South African police had developed a firearms strategy that should make effective firearms control possible within the country. The South African Government considered that all excess, obsolete or seized weapons having a calibre of less than 12.7 mm should be destroyed, and the national defence and police forces had destroyed more than 115,000 light weapons since July 2001, while the army had destroyed more than 270,000 in May 2001. The South African delegation considered the United Nations Programme of Action a concrete framework for concerted action in the prevention, control and elimination of illicit small arms trade and felt that it was necessary to identify needs and possible partnerships. The delegation did not intend to revise the Programme of Action or to change its objectives, but did feel that the participants in the Meeting should have a clearer vision of the challenges posed at the world and regional levels and especially the national level.

50. **Mr. Kirn** (Slovenia) said that the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in New York in July 2001, had revealed the extent and gravity of the problem. The adoption of the Programme of Action had provided the international community with a framework, which Slovenia was determined to apply and promote. The Slovene Special Interministerial Group charged with the question of light weapons had decided that all governmental institutions must, where necessary, amend existing legislation. Thus, Slovenia had undertaken a complete overhaul of its legislation, its system of regulations and its administrative system, the details of which could be found in the report submitted by Slovenia to the Department for Disarmament Affairs in April 2003. In addition, in June 2003 the Government of Slovenia had created the post of national focal point for light weapons, who would be charged with coordinating cooperation between the competent governmental institutions in the field of light weapons, overseeing the application of the legislation, observing the current system of export controls, preparing the requested reports and monitoring the application of the relevant international obligations.

51. Slovenia lay near a region that had been in the grips of war and instability over the previous 10 years, and the consequences could still be felt. In 2002, UNDP and the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe had created a regional centre for the exchange of information on light weapons, headquartered in Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro. The purpose of the programme was to promote the collection of weapons and create a favourable environment for sustainable development. Slovenia would encourage international donors to contribute to the centre, which depended primarily on cash donations.

52. In March 2003 Slovenia had hosted the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in South Eastern Europe, sponsored by the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Conference had brought together more than 100 participants from over 40 countries. The questions studied had included export controls and procedures; the collection of weapons; the creation of public awareness; demobilization, disarmament and rehabilitation; stockpile security and management; border management; and international cooperation and assistance. During the Conference, Slovenia had proposed the creation of the post of national focal point for light weapons who might be charged with finding additional resources for various programmes, especially those relating to technical assistance, training and computer hardware and software and with providing the link between the assistance available in donor countries, international organizations, scientific institutions and the private sector, on the one hand, and the needs expressed by countries, on the other hand. The focal point should establish a relationship of close cooperation with the programmes existing in the region, in particular the Belgrade regional centre, the office of the South-East Europe Cooperation Initiative in Bucharest, the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe and OSCE.

53. As a candidate for membership in the European Union, Slovenia was already required to follow the Union's policies and regulations. It was also an active member of Human Security Network, which emphasized the human dimension of the problem of light weapons. Slovenia considered that the active participation of all States in the implementation of the Programme of Action was essential if one was to realize the common goal in the fight against the illicit trade in light weapons.

54. **Mr. Goussous** (Jordan) observed that small arms and light weapons killed over 1,000 persons daily, that over 80 per cent of the victims were women and children, and that only 18 million out of the 550 million small arms and light weapons currently in circulation were used by government forces.

55. This was a very familiar situation in the Middle East, a region where the Israeli-Arab conflict had been going on for over 50 years, but it should be remembered that small arms and light weapons did not suffice to launch a military operation, their only effect being to fan the flames of existing conflicts. Jordan reaffirmed that the solution of the Palestinian question and the full and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict would do much to combat the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and make the States of the region work more closely to eliminate such trade.

56. The geographic situation and unique history of the Middle East explained the presence of a very large number of small arms and light weapons, since the arms traffic was a major source of revenue in terms of the average per capita income in the region. Arms trafficking was linked to drug trafficking. It was a heavy burden for States to combat trafficking on both fronts and it was therefore urgent to coordinate efforts and strengthen cooperation at the bilateral and regional levels in both areas. It was important to devise effective national programmes for collecting and registering the arms and issuing licences, and to ensure the application of the national regulatory laws governing arms possession, monitoring, import and export. Cooperation by the competent authorities was important at the regional level, and States must adopt confidence-building measures and act with transparency in order to combat that serious problem.

57. As to international cooperation, his delegation believed that the following steps should be taken: the manufacture of and trade in small arms and light weapons must be reserved for government authorities and authorized merchants; the manufacturers of small arms and light weapons must mark them so as to facilitate their tracking, and the producer States should not export small arms and light weapons if the end-users were non-State entities; small arms and light weapons must not be exported to States parties to a conflict, unless such weapons were requested for purposes of self-defence; stockpiles must be placed under government responsibility, with greater control and protection of the stockpiles to avoid theft; States must cooperate more in exchanging information on arms shipments in order to ascertain the legality of shipments passing through the various border points of entry; customs regimes and security services must be reinforced and given state-of-the-art equipment to detect contraband arms; States must cooperate more on investigations in order to facilitate the surveillance of arms shipments and identify the individuals and groups involved in trafficking; and laws and regulations must be drawn up authorizing the effective monitoring of weapons possession by individuals and groups.

58. As a way of combating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Jordan deployed sizeable forces on its borders — at great cost — in order to prevent such arms from reaching the areas of conflict in the region. The Government authorities had taken the following steps: it had adopted laws making it an offence to smuggle or to illicitly trade in, manufacture or possess firearms and ammunition and use them without authorization; regulated the legal possession of hunting weapons and small revolvers requiring licence holders to have no criminal record and to be of sound mind; launched an ongoing information campaign about the tragedies that could result from the use of firearms; kept exact statistics on crimes committed in the Kingdom involving the use of firearms; reinforced the means of detecting arms in airports and border posts; improved the technical and scientific laboratories of the judicial police by having them use the latest techniques; supported local authorities in the effort to combat the illicit use and possession of firearms; participated in regional and international meetings in the field and reported on the Jordanian experience; heightened the public sense of security; and destroyed all arms seized.

59. Jordan's efforts had produced the following successful results: there had been a change in how the public regarded the bearing of arms, which had been

discredited; the demand for firearms, and therefore the trade in them, had reduced; there was a tendency for persons holding weapons without a permit to seek the necessary authorization; the volume of weapons seized in illicit trade cases has declined, reflecting the lessening of the phenomenon.

60. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that the United Nations Programme of Action would be fully implemented.

61. **Mr. Amano** (Japan) said that, since Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had brought the problem of small arms and light weapons to the attention of the international community in 1995, Japan had stressed the importance of the question and introduced resolutions on the subject at almost every session of the General Assembly.

62. In 2001, the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects had adopted the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to which Japan attached great value because it embodied a comprehensive approach that was particularly needed in the case of a multifaceted issue. The current task was to put that Programme of Action into effect, and the Biennial Meeting of States was an occasion to exchange views and seek forward-looking ideas to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

63. To facilitate the implementation of the Programme of Action, Japan had organized a number of regional seminars and workshops, which had provided an opportunity to address important questions such as the weaponization of societies, child soldiers, restoration of law and order, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into society.

64. As for measures to be adopted in the future, the establishment of a tracing system for small arms would afford effective protection, since the marking and tracking of each weapon would make it possible, through international cooperation, to determine exactly where the illegal diversion of arms occurred. It was to be hoped that the tracing system could be approved as soon as possible and accompanied by stricter surveillance measures to secure the restriction of banning of arms exports to regions where the Security Council had imposed embargoes. His country was not, however, an arms exporter.

65. It was also important to reduce the number of victims of small arms, of whom there were about half a million every year. That was primarily the responsibility of the countries concerned, but international cooperation and assistance were necessary in order to remove the root causes of civilians' possession of such arms by means of tighter border controls, more stringent national laws and regulations, restoration of the rule of law and similar measures. The consolidation of peace was one of the main pillars of Japan's foreign policy; it had, for example, hosted the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in 2002 and was also collaborating in a project aimed at assisting the Cambodian Government's efforts to collect small arms. That project covered weapons collection and destruction ceremonies, as well as public awareness campaigns and drives to register arms. His Government hoped that the arms collection project would be crowned with success and might serve as an example of how to meet local communities' numerous development needs.

66. In conclusion, his country, which was chairing the First Biennial Meeting of States, wished to reaffirm its determination to combat the scourges attendant on small arms.

67. **Mr. McDougall** (Canada) said that many countries had presented outstanding reports outlining their Governments' endeavours to implement the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and that they had at their disposal a host of baseline data, such as the Small Arms Survey, which clearly demonstrated the serious repercussions of the proliferation of small arms, which were still being used to perpetrate mass killings and destroy communities, at the expense of economic development, basic services such as health and education and community livelihoods.

68. The Programme of Action provided a framework for concrete action, which unambiguously established Governments' responsibility to act on such issues as manufacturing, marking and tracing arms, record-keeping, export controls, stockpile management and the collection and destruction of small arms. The execution of the Programme depended on sustained political will, concerted national, regional and multilateral cooperation and the dedication of adequate resources.

69. In its national report, submitted in English and French, his country described the steps it had taken to carry out the Programme of Action locally and internationally, through the promulgation of national laws on small arms, the enforcement of export controls and support for arms collection and destruction programmes in other countries. Furthermore, his Government had supported important regional seminars in Africa, Europe, Central America, Southeast Asia and Central Asia and had promoted the launching of a trust fund to finance the destruction of almost 12,000 tons of ammunition in Albania.

70. The challenges that had to be met in order to keep people safe from gun violence included: the issue of the civilian possession of arms, especially those designed for military use; State responsibility for arms transfers; and other priorities such as the misuse of small arms by agents of the State, including the army, the police and paramilitary forces. It was also necessary to work together with the communities which faced the scourge of small arms every day, by putting in place demand reduction strategies and community policing initiatives. Civil society was an indispensable ally in collective efforts to make communities safer and, through the Human Security Network, Canada had undertaken consultations with NGOs and United Nations agencies on the human dimension of the small arms problem.

71. The international community which had met at the United Nations in 2001 had recognized that the threat posed to people by small arms justified collective efforts. The challenge would be to put into effect the Programme of Action adopted at the Conference and produce other tangible results at the next Biennial Meeting of States. His delegation looked forward to working with Governments and NGOs in order to take stock of progress with the Programme of Action and to gauge how much was left to be done, to seek to learn from various positive and negative experiences, or even to consider amendments to the Programme of Action in order to improve it and contemplate new goals.

72. **Mr. Aguilar Zinser** (Mexico) said that his country was intent on implementing the Programme of Action, as evidenced by the national reports submitted in 2002 and 2003. From its own experience on the subject, it had drawn two conclusions, namely, that it was important for nations to establish a legal and institutional infrastructure and national coordination mechanisms, and that the cooperation of all countries, especially those producing and exporting small arms and light weapons, was indispensable for eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Mexico had accordingly adopted, for the regulation of all matters relating to the marking, manufacture, registration, import and export of firearms and explosives, a federal law that Parliament was currently considering in order to update and improve it. The existence of national coordination bodies being another essential element in controlling the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, Mexico had in 1995 also established an inter-institutional coordination group for the prevention and control of arms trafficking, in which various federal and state bodies were participating. The group's work had shown that trafficking in small arms and light weapons in Mexico was done either individually (Mexican citizens or foreign nationals purchasing one or more weapons for their personal use in the United States and then transporting or shipping them to Mexico), or in an organized manner in the context of organized crime or drug trafficking. Mexico had, furthermore, a federal arms registry regularly updated by the National Defence Department, which made it possible to ascertain at any time the number of weapons manufactured and traded in the country. His Government, moreover, strictly controlled the production, import and stockpiling of firearms, which were marked at the time of their manufacture or bore the name and address of the importer visibly when they were imported. Mexico did not export arms, and produced only those needed to safeguard its security.

73. Knowing that international cooperation was a crucial element in the struggle against trafficking in small arms and light weapons, Mexico had been a firm proponent of having the Organization of American States (OAS) draft the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, the most advanced regional instrument in force for combating the illegal trade in firearms. Mexico was also a party to the Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and had participated actively in various international events relating to the application of the Programme of Action, including the current Biennial Meeting.

74. The current Meeting should not only allow an exchange of experiences on the implementation and the obstacles to implementation of the Programme of Action but also further reflection on some of the questions on which consensus had not been reached in the 2001 Conference, even though they were basic issues on which most States had been ready to make recommendations in the Programme of Action. Among them were the need to limit and monitor the purchase and possession of weapons by civilians, not only to curb the culture of violence but also to prevent arms that were originally legal from being diverted to an illegal trade. Also at issue was the need to put an end to arms transfers between States and non-governmental agents, a permanent source of conflict and instability in various regions of the world, especially in Africa. Mexico believed in that regard that, to prevent conflicts and combat organized crime and terrorism, all Governments without exception should make a commitment themselves not to conduct or authorize operations resulting in the transfer of arms to non-governmental agencies. It also believed that the international community should without further delay begin negotiations on a binding instrument governing the marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons, bearing in mind the recommendations of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts established to study the feasibility of developing such an instrument and the valuable contributions of non-governmental organizations. It was, furthermore, important to analyse more in depth the question of brokers or arms merchants, to whom the Programme of Action referred only marginally and whose activities should be strictly controlled.

75. All those questions were closely linked to the fact that, recently, more and more parties to conflicts had had access to small arms and light weapons, which had widened the scope of hostilities and heightened the destructive impact upon civilian populations, who had gone from being occasional victims to designated targets. It was frustrating to know that the international community had not taken decisive steps to suppress trafficking in small arms and light weapons, especially in West and Central Africa, and that the States concerned lacked the power to eradicate such trafficking when the small arms and light weapons came from countries outside their region. It was to be hoped that the discussions at the current session would help shield millions of victims, civilians for the most part, from the devastating effects of those weapons of mass destruction represented by small arms and light weapons.

76. **Ms. Puertas de Rodriguez** (Peru) said that her country was neither a producer nor an exporter of weapons and was committed to peace and international security, as evidenced by its active participation in the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and by the fact that it was a party to the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and to the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, and Explosives, and Other Related Materials.

77. Like Canada, Peru believed that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons was multidimensional and needed to be suppressed simultaneously at the global, regional and national levels in all its aspects. Indeed, it was in that context that the Peruvian Ministry of External Affairs was currently reviewing the establishment of a national commission for the suppression of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, which would coordinate and facilitate the implementation of inter-sectoral measures to follow up the Programme of Action and various legal instruments, particularly those affecting the region.

78. Peru spared no effort in following up the Programme of Action but had still confronted a number of problems: domestic legislation for the suppression of the illicit trade in arms still contained juridical gaps, communication between the competent national authorities and the public was still inadequate, national terminology on the illicit arms trade was yet to be harmonized with United Nations terminology, and there was still some illogicality in the implementation of laws. Moreover, the Peruvian Ministry of the Interior did not have sufficient resources at its disposal to effectively administer arms stockpiles, to ensure their security and to destroy them if necessary.

79. The first ceremony for the public destruction of civilian weapons, confiscated by Peru's Ministry of the Interior, had taken place in Lima in December 2002 during the celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. An educational

programme had also been launched on that occasion to teach children and adolescents about the inherent dangers of firearms and foster a culture of peace among young people. Those activities had led to the creation of artistic works and the construction of a monument to peace and disarmament using destroyed weapons.

80. The Peruvian national police were stationed permanently at airports, maritime and river ports and, with the assistance of customs experts, at the borders to monitor the illicit trade in weapons and explosives. The Peruvian customs administration, which was a member of the World Customs Organization, operated a national and international information network which allowed it to collect data on the illicit trade in weapons and explosives and to exchange such information with customs authorities all over the world. It constantly monitored the flow of persons, goods and vehicles through Peruvian territory.

81. It was essential for States to cooperate in enacting the necessary domestic regulations on arms imports and exports. Similarly, the international transit of all categories of small arms and light weapons should be regulated and as additional measures, a broad and permanent clearing house should be set up to ensure that all countries, particularly developing countries, had the technology and capacities necessary for the achievement of the objectives set by the Programme of Action.

82. The Government of Peru had submitted a request to the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean for technical and financial assistance in implementing the Programme of Action in the following areas: national campaign for the collection of small arms and light weapons; destruction of firearms, ammunition and explosives; securing and monitoring of arms and ammunition stockpiles; training of staff concerned within the framework of the Andean Community, in the registration, holding and transfer of weapons; and stricter monitoring of the legal trade in firearms, ammunition and explosives through improved computerized systems.

83. **Mr. Assiah** (Togo) said that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons had a particularly adverse effect on developing countries because of their inherent chronic instability and the fact that they were coveted for various reasons. Moreover, those countries were used as testing grounds and outlets for new weapons. In a number of developing countries, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons was also linked to poverty, which was the origin of demands sometimes echoed by political movements determined to promote their agenda at all cost. For that reason, although small arms trafficking was a source of concern, the real danger was situations that were allowed, deliberately or otherwise, to develop into conflicts.

84. Prevention must be at the forefront of efforts to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Togo, despite its modest means, had set up a national commission against the proliferation and illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The establishment of that commission had led to the destruction of arms and ammunition but much remained to be done. Togo solemnly urged other countries and international organizations to help it in the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons.

85. In addressing the issue of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, all too often there was a tendency to consider proliferation out of context and to forget that it resulted from trade that had been instituted and accepted as such. Perhaps therefore there was a certain amount of hypocrisy in condemning the proliferation of small arms and light weapons while accepting it as a quasi-official form of trade. That seemed to be the very crux of the matter: if blame was placed solely on the buyer and not on the seller or manufacturer of small arms and light weapons, all efforts were doomed.

86. Another big problem was the existence of home-made weapons, which were no less lethal than industrially manufactured weapons and were not included in any statistics and conventional monitoring systems because they were produced and sold within a closed circuit, known only to the initiated and excluding all outsiders. Any action that overlooked the proliferation of those types of arms would therefore be inadequate.

87. That being said, the fight against the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons required firmly committing to a struggle for peace and sustainable development, not only reducing the number of those weapons in circulation but also tackling the economic and social causes of the illicit trade. The

most effective way of confronting that scourge was to display the necessary political and economic will. It was therefore crucial for the international community to apply itself wholeheartedly to that task, and none other, in accordance with the Programme of Action.

88. **Mr. Litavrin** (Russian Federation) said his country devoted a great deal of attention to the Programme of Action, as was demonstrated by the fact that in April 2003 it had submitted a report on its implementation and that its Minister for Foreign Affairs had addressed a special message to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the occasion of the current Biennial Meeting.

89. The Russian Federation had taken legislative measures to impose strict controls on the production and export of small arms and light weapons even before the Programme of Action had been adopted. His country considered that the marking rules and practices it was applying met the most stringent international criteria.

90. In 2000, the Russian Federation had, in conjunction with the countries members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), developed and begun to implement a series of measures aimed at reducing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons on its territory, judging that the main aim of the Programme of Action was less to regulate the trade in small arms and light weapons than to tighten controls, to identify existing reserves of small arms and light weapons and to organize at the international level, in cooperation with other countries, prevention of the illicit trade in such arms. For example, between 2000 and 2003 its services responsible for preventing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons had seized and confiscated more than 20,000 weapons and nearly 3.3 million items of ammunition, including 9,300 grenades. Also, regular inspections and inventories had been undertaken of the arms stockpiles of companies, and the security of such stockpiles had been enhanced.

91. Furthermore, in accordance with the recommendations set out in the Programme of Action, an automated system of weapons accounting (civilian use, sidearms and combat weapons) had been put in place in certain arms factories, and the plan for the period 2003-2007 was to establish a single system of accounting and monitoring of arms, ammunitions and explosives production at national level which would be more modern than the systems currently in existence.

92. As for arms exports and imports, the Russian Federation had acquired a system for monitoring incoming and outgoing light weapons and firearms which, by authorizing only legal persons to export articles for military use and by containing no provision authorizing arms brokering at international level, should prevent the legal trade in small arms and light weapons and firearms fuelling the illicit traffic in those weapons. Recently, with the anti-terrorism campaign being stepped up, the competent authorities were following very closely exports of small arms and light weapons, and particularly portable anti-aircraft missile systems, which could be particularly dangerous if they fell into the hands of terrorists.

93. In accordance with the Programme of Action, the Russian Federation had also been actively engaged in seizing, scrapping and destroying arms in illicit circulation. Some 21,000 firearms and 1,200 small arms and light weapons had thus been scrapped and destroyed in 2001, and in 2002 the corresponding figures had been 464,000 firearms and 6,000 small arms and light weapons.

94. The systematic elimination of small arms and light weapons posed financial problems, and the Government was currently studying the possibility of appealing for foreign assistance to set up new centres for scrapping and destroying illicit weapons. It was also noteworthy that it had not destroyed weapons publicly for security reasons, that the programme to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants was being actively implemented, and that the programme for weapons buy-back and voluntary hand-over was proceeding successfully.

95. As it was difficult to provide a full account of the implementation of the Programme of Action at national level in such a brief intervention, the delegation of the Russian Federation intended to return to the international aspects of implementation later in the debate.

96. **Mr. Greminger** (Switzerland) said that all States were required to ensure that small arms and light weapons were used in a responsible manner in the national territory and at the international level. Switzerland was certain that full implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action would contribute substantially to the building of a safer and more

peaceful world. Switzerland was engaged in the campaign against the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons because today most armed conflicts were civil wars in which the designated target was the civilian population and non-State actors also participated, often using small arms and light weapons.

97. Switzerland supplied small arms and light weapons to non-State sectors only with the explicit agreement of the State concerned. It had tried unsuccessfully to have a paragraph along those lines inserted in the United Nations Programme of Action. Switzerland was still in the forefront of those studying the matter, trying to see how national export criteria could be devised so as to be applicable to transfers by non-State actors, whether the current provisions of international law set limits on arms deliveries to non-State actors, how the legitimate needs of a population threatened with being massacred could be met when the State was not in a position to protect them, without at the same time delivering arms to non-State actors.

98. Switzerland emphasized the importance of an international instrument for tracing small arms and light weapons in combating illicit arms trafficking, with a view to complementing the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. In that connection, Switzerland and France were playing a leading role internationally in the codification of tracing and considered that the mandate entrusted in the United Nations to a group of government experts to verify the feasibility of tracing instruments represented an important advance. Switzerland was proud to have supported the Geneva non-governmental organization Small Arms Survey, which published a reference work giving a detailed small arms inventory. The "Small Arms Survey" for 2003 contained a chapter entitled "Obstructing development" which dealt with the correlation between small arms and development.

99. He encouraged all participants in the Programme of Action to do everything possible to bring about its full implementation.

100. Switzerland favoured broadening the concept of security, which had to go beyond security between States and embrace the human security dimension, which offered an effective approach to handling the question of small arms and light weapons, since it was a way of bringing together its implications for security, development, peace and human rights as well as the humanitarian repercussions.

101. He recalled that the Human Security Network, of which Switzerland was a member, emphasized the impact on human security of the uncontrolled dissemination of small arms and light weapons. The Network would be organizing a workshop on the humanitarian consequences of small arms within the framework of the 28th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to be held in Geneva at the beginning of December 2003.

102. **Mr. Tesch** (Australia) gave an account of the progress made in implementing the Programme of Action at national and regional levels. He recalled that Australia's firearms laws were among the most stringent in the world. The Australian Government was working on regulatory regimes and systems for enforcing laws, using its competences in intelligence gathering and analysis, which it was continually improving. It had developed a national policy on firearms trafficking, which prohibited such trafficking between States, increased the penalties for illegal possession of firearms, strengthened the powers of the law enforcement agencies to detect and prosecute firearms traffickers, improved customs and border controls aimed at detecting handguns and enhanced the monitoring of firearms vendors.

103. Australia was seeking to ensure the safety of firearms storage and arsenals, and to that end the authorities were checking that the regulations were being respected, emphasizing the obligations incumbent on owners of firearms and limiting the number of handguns a vendor could stock.

104. Those measures had resulted in a reduction in the number of persons killed or wounded by firearms.

105. Australia was determined to work with its regional partners and civil society to combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region, and in particular had collaborated in efforts to draft a model law on the control of arms in the Pacific region. The meeting of leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum to be held in August 2003 would have before it a draft model law. The Australian defence forces had helped the island countries of the Pacific to apply effective management practices to arms stocks and had improved the safety of arsenals.

106. Australia favoured greater transparency as a confidence measure at regional and international levels, and would endeavour to improve the transparency of its defence exports. The report on the subject would comprise a category specifically devoted to light weapons exports.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.